

THE

Best Choice

FOR

Religion and Government.

IN A

CONFERENCE

BETWEEN

Sir *Anthony*, a Latitudinarian ; *S. W. C.*
John Ponteus, a Religion-Broker ; *A. B. W. B. B.*
Mr. *Maggot*, an Independent ; *J. S. Wood*
Mr. *Mouth*, a Gifted-Speaker ; and *Anna*
Friend *Henry*, an Undeceiv'd Quaker.

Difficile est, Satyram non scribere.

L O N D O N :

Printed in the Year 1697.

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Mr. Thompson, a Unitarian ;
John Pomeroy, a Religion-Broker ;
Mr. Lloyd, a Unitarian ;
Mr. May, a Quaker ; and
Friend Henry, an Undecided Quaker.

By the Rev. J. G. Thompson, Minister.

LONDON :

Printed for the Author.

T H E

Best Choice for Religion and Government,

Agreed on

In a Late Sober Conference

B Y

Sundry sorts of Pretending *Rechabite-Dis-*
senters in *England*, mentioned in the
 Title-Page.

*Sir Anthony, and others of that Party (meeting at an
 Obsolete, and Neglected-Castle, haunted with
 Frightful Apparitions, sometimes in the ugly shape
 of Empty-Pint-Bottles), with fervent Zeal, and yet
 seeming Affection, proceeded in this Friendly man-*
ner.

Knight. **Y**our Servant, Gentlemen; your most Faithful
 Humble Servant. *(passionately hugs 'em.*

Mouth. W'are yours, *Sir Anthony*, all yours.

Knight. Y'are my Worthy Masters, and I'm glad of a
 mouthful of your sweet pleasant refreshing Air: Little do
 you that dwell in the Countrey, know the grand Fatigue
 and Business of the Town.

Maggot. Doubtless your Pains have been great: I dare say, we Elected a Couple of as Industrious, Laborious Members as ever pifs d.

Ponteus. There's some pleasure too in well-doing: And truly, Sir *Anthony*, we have long'd for you a vast while, that we might all religiously lay our Heads together.

Knight. I thank you *John*; I thank you all; my Head, Hands and Heels too are at your command.

Mag. We find it so, Sir *Anthony*; else I, and other no less deserving men, had never been set down for *Commissioners*: I please you Sir, your Friends are highly oblig'd; I and my Brethren more abundantly; who (looking like so many unregarded insignificant Mechanicks before this) now can make some small Figure in the World; and like wise people, that know their own strength, we endeavour to make the best on't.

Mouth. Well said, Brother *Maggot*; and I profess to you Sir *Anthony*, I'm pleas'd, nay, I rejoyce, to see this blessed day! When the only Men of sanctify'd Understandings, superabounding with Grace and Goodness, do Judge and Govern the Earth; while the Profaner sort, (tho with Coach and Six) Pretenders to Law, Gospel, and Physick too, come Cap in hand, and bow before us.

Quak. Yea, verily, I think it wisely done, if ye encourage the Godly party, and abate their Taxes, (tho you pinch all other Men) provided, you can be sure to hold the Reins now you have 'em; and to continue Honourable Wooll-combers, Right Worshipful Coblers, Worshipful Constables, and Dignify'd Farmers during Life.

Knight. Never doubt that; (if in my Power) do but choose me and my Gracious Son, we'll certainly Espouse your Cause, (for 'tis the Good Old one) and represent you, as most fit to be trusted with the Administration of Government; Men of such brave Spirits, as not to fear the hatred, or believe

Mag. Well, Well; The Saints themselves are not without faults; if any thing's amiss, they may mend it in the next Parliament. Thee knowest they were against the Bill upon Malt, and don't yet own, that they first mov'd it; We have a *New-Coin'd Findness* of Money; buy cheap and sell dear; which (with a large Salary from the Tax) may enable me, in a short time to keep a Coach like a *Colonel*; and then let's see what robust *Carter*, or *Corydon*, dare contend with me for the way.

Quak. Thou talkst vainly, Friend; don't fill thy brain with such idle Fancies.

Mouth. Courage I say Monsieur; 'tis in vain now to contend with us: For to my Modish Hat, Gloves, and Cloathes, I'll venture to add a Sword; and scorn to give way to *Bishop*, or *King*, but just to serve my own Ends: That is give, give 'em leave to *Abdicate* the Nation; and then our work's done to some purpose.

Quak. Hark thee Friend *Jo.* Extremes are dangerous; Meekness and Moderation become the Saints; advance gradually; That all may be in Love with your Temper and Authority; Then---if another Parliament shou'd see cause to take the Sword out of your hands, (as 'tis probable they will) you'll go off with a better smell; *Be good in your Office.*

Mouth. 'Tis grave Counsel I protest; and am not a little surpriz'd at it; I wish with all my heart, *there's nothing of the Jesuit in thee, Henry.*

Quak. The Congregations wou'd be more happy, had'st thou half the Wit or Learning of a Jesuit; but I suppose thou conceal'st thy Learning purposely to be thought inspir'd, as some of our Friends are suspected to do.

Mouth. *Bono Fido*, I don't; for I can scarce write my Name.

Knight. For all that, you seem to have a rare Talent, Mr. *Mouth*, that you can speak so readily without book; doubtless, that's the Soul-searching, Soul-edifying, and Soul-saving Doctrine,

Doctrine, that naturally comes flowing from a man with some Vigour; The Women delight to have things set home to 'em. And I must confess our Neighbour *Henry* is very sensible: Come, my Noble Masters, shake hands, shake hands; We're all Saints alike, and ingenious Men: 'Tis not fit we should differ about Niceties.

Quak. No more nice than wise, by my consent; but 'tis as plain as a Pike-Staff, That whatever our Policy may be, Our Opinions, our Persuasions in Religion, are never, never to be reconcil'd. I am not for quite running down a *Persecuted*, I say, a *Persecuted People*, (as the Church of *England* now is) we did not approve of *Persecution* in our own Cases; nay, we cry'd out against it; and 'tis generally the Temper of the *English* Nation, to pity and help the *distress'd*; therefore let's well consider, what measures we take, lest by over-much Severity we happen to set up what we wou'd destroy.

Knight. But we're almost run into a Common-Wealth already; and when that once takes place, then adieu to the present Government.

Brok. Every man (as I humbly conceive) has an equal right to govern; and the Titles of *King* and *Priest*, were only usurp'd to enslave the World.

Quak. Talk as long as you please, A Common Wealth has been, and may be a Common Woe; yet Government there must be; *i.e.* a Superiority and Inferiority in Church and State; as in every well-order'd Family, there must be one to take care of the Spiritual and Temporal welfare of it. Now if we agree so far (as in truth we never yet agreed in any thing else) to subvert the *Present*, what Governours shall we set up? For the National Government, for Peace-sake, must be in the hands of one sort of men; And 'tis necessary there should also be a settled Standard of Religion. Before we proceed a step further, let's fairly try which of all our Opinions must be uppermost; for one, and but one (without dispute) will be so.

Knight.

lieve they shall ever need the good will, and help of their Neighbours; Men rais'd above Interest, Passion, Malice, or Revenge; and truly (as our Friend, *Jo.* intimates.)

Dominion is founded in Grace.

Brok. I vow to ye (in my mind) Sir *Anthony's* an Oracle of a Man; not inferiour to Mr. *Mouth* himself; I warrant ye Boys! He makes rare good Speeches i'th' House; and should he do nothing for us, we may be sure of *Good Words*.

Mouth. You know Gentlemen, how I have run and ridden, flatter'd and dissembl'd, swore and ly'd for the Cause; threatn'd *Poor Men* with want of Bread, if they did not Vote as we requir'd 'em.

Mag. My Zeal was furious; I car'd not what I said, or did; stuck at nothing to farther our *Blessed Design*, nor ever will.

Mouth. My Conscience, much wider than my Chaps, I pass'd for a *Gifted-Man*; wrought pow'rfully upon the Holy Sisters, and these mightily prevail'd over their *Contented Husbands*: And, a, Behold! My Reward in this life! — I wish 'tis not all I must expect. [*Aside,*

I'm gloriously rais'd from a poor Constable to an High Commissioner; I had rather been a Committee-man, (as my Righteous Father of Blessed Memory was) for I dearly Love the very thoughts of those Reforming Times, and I hope to see the like again; I have Plurality in Spirituals, besides Temporal Preferments; Ev'ry Body adores the Rising Sun; and if the Saints, the Saints must govern the Earth, I'll never be the Fool, that balks his own Good Fortune.

Quak. I tell thee truly, I and our Friends have considerably lost, by joyning against the Church; sunk in our Trades, rais'd in our Taxes; yet we did all we cou'd, but swear for the Party.

Knight..

Knight. To make you compleat Votaries, My Son and I gain'd you the Priviledge of a Declaration, in lieu of an Oath; And now give me thy hand! What can hinder us from carrying double, a second time?

Quak. Promise not to be angry; I'll freely give my Judgment in this Affair.

Knight. I can take nothing ill from thee friend *Henry*,
go on ——— [smiles upon him.]

Quak. Then, I solemnly declare, in the presence of Almighty God; that we, (the People commonly call'd *Quakers*) are ensnared and betray'd by that *Declaration*; 'Tis as much an Oath, as if we us'd the formality of Kissing the Book, like other Men; you have done enough to make a Priest swear; our Religion gave us no liberty to swear, because we wou'd not strictly bind our selves to any Government, and if the Church of *England* sees, that we now can swallow an Oath, to oppose them, or serve a private turn; we deserve to starve.

Brok. Hold, Hold! Neighbour *Henry*, ben't so passionate, you may still delude the Church Men in matter of Trade; they'r Universally more Charitable, tho not so Politick and Self-ended as we are. And as for our Reverend worthy Members, they'r none of those honest Countrey Gentlemen, that love Hunting, and are weary of laying Impositions on the People; These are never out of business.

Quak. Plainly if I'm not mistaken, they have done our business; hunted too fast; else they need not be lash'd and coupl'd for their Extravagance. The Church Party are not Fools, always to enrich their Enemies: And let me tell Sir *Anthony* something more; The World sees clearer than formerly; few think, or speak so well of you, as they did; and upon Tryal, we don't find you those *Gracious Persons*, fit to represent and rule the Saints, as we expected.

Knight. What say ye Gentlemen, shall we vote it?

Omnes. Yes, yes, yes; 'tis a rational and necessary proposal.

Knight. Then (as the Representative of this divided Corporation) I Sir *Anthony*, Knt. and Bar. do declare for the *Latitudinarian Principle*, because I have a mind to favour and engage all sides:--But hold a little; if I must chuse one sort for the National Church, it shall be *the Family of Love*: Oh, Friends! the Family of Love, that's what I and mine do most adhere to.

Mag. The *Independent* for my Money; for we may divide and subdivide, as oft as we please, and live under no restraint, unless that of our own Humour.

Mouth. I ever sided with the *Presbyterians*, yet I don't agree with 'em in all Points.

Brok. I vote for the *Seekers*, not knowing (in this Age) what to fix on; yet hope e're long to find out a *New Religion*; I am persuaded people would be fonder of it than of New Money.

Quak. And pray why not *Adamites*, *Arians*, *Socinians*, *Arminians*, *Anabaptists*, *Fifth-Monarchy-men*, *Millenaries*, *Ranters*, *Antinomians*, *Sabbatarians*, *Libertines*, *Muggletonians*, *Papists*, *English-Jews*, *Turks*, and many other Sects in England, set up for Government, as well as *Latitudinarians*, *Independents*, *Presbyterians*, *Seekers*?

Mag. I approve of none but those of my Opinion (and I hardly know what that is;) But deliver us from the *Muggletonians*, of all the rest! For, they'll think it just to Curse, Damn and Sink us, for a pack of Knaves and Fools; therefore no *Muggletonian* I beseech you!

Quak. Nor *English-Jews*; they'll ever betray and abdicate their Prince; cry out, Away with him, away with him; as they did, who Crucify'd the Best of Kings.

Brok. Can we contrive no way, to bring this odd Medley into one regular Government? We may perhaps associate in a *Caravan*, but 'tis impossible to joyn as in the Communi-

on of a Church. No matter, if I can make a Penny of 'em, I'll set up for a Religious Mountebank, give out Printed Bills, *That all sorts and Kinds of Schism*, are to be had at my Shop; (*The sign of the Cloven Foot*) Three or four Scruples of each for one shilling, (cheap enough in all conscience:) Do ye think I shan't have a thriving Trade on't?

Quak. Thou may'st peradventure, get Money by turning Quack; But without Question, a Composition made up of so many venemous and contrary Qualities (if greedily swallow'd by thy direction) is able not to cure, but Poyson and distract the Kingdom.---*Dear Ponteus!* Remember, that if interest is thy God, 'tis one of thy own making; and consequently, thy sin is Idolatry in adoring him.---But, if one prevailing Opinion, (like a Predominant humour of the Body) must govern; I and my Friends expect *Quakerism* shou'd carry the day; we have Number and Riches to recommend it; 'Tis compounded of fewer Ingredients, and so must be purer; we have taken out the Sacraments, and all External Forms of Worship; we endeavour to bring in the Minds of the People out of all *Visibles*; and truly our Religion is so fine, we have distill'd it so often, that it evaporates into nothing but Spirit and Fancy.

Mouth. Ay, Ay, and all that's left, seems but a dead and corrupt Accident, fit for little but the Dunghil.

Quak.---This Man never speaks, but his mouth opens; Look to thy own Religion, thou Presbyterian Belweather! See what thine is? Since thou forsook'st the Church of *England*! Ye are a Body without an Head to govern; or Nerves for strength and motion: Ye have no Order or Discipline now among you, and by your Principle of mutual forbearance may not long hold together; what check have you to keep perverse Men in Obedience? If for their many Crimes and Errors, being shut out of thy Meeting-house, they may with open Arms, and Applause due to real Converts, be receiv'd

ceiv'd in this or t'other particular Congregation, as it best suits with their good liking? After all, I demand fair play among you, for the Superiority of my own; but am resolv'd to submit to none of your Opinions, spring they from *Rome* or *Geneva*: one Finger of theirs is much heavier than the Hand, Arm, and whole Body of the Church, the Moderate Church of *England*: and since 'tis necessary there should be a National Church (to prevent the many dismal Calamities and Errors that once followed the Removal of it,) let's keep where we are, that's my Vote, lest we foolishly change for a worse, and involve our selves in endless disputes.

Mag. But till the Church of *England's* quite subverted, none of us can have the least probability of prevailing.

Quak. This *Independent-man*, in hopes of Governing, has still an envious Eye upon the Church: But prithee consider, thy Opinion has no Foundation for its support; You cou'd not keep the Government when you once had it: I take you to be the fittest men living to pull down a Church, but not to edifie or establish one. Shall I ask thee, Brother *Maggot*, In case the *Independents* shou'd again chance to get the Power, what in that time must become of all the rest? for 'tis plain their Opinions are directly opposite to thine.

Mag. They may have Liberty of Conscience assur'd to 'em.

Quak. The never to be forgotten Cruelty in *New-England*, is an Objection sufficient to baffle that pretence of Liberty; and I have Reasons inducing me to believe, that we shall never enjoy so much Christian-Liberty and Toleration, under any one Sect or Party in this Nation, as the Church of *England* at this time allows us. I wish our Imprudence don't demerit this Favour. — You Mr. *Mouth*, What say you for the *Presbyterians*? wou'd they grant Liberty of Conscience to all others that differ from 'em?

Mouth. That may not be granted to all without sin; some of the Parties maintain Principles very destructive of Christi-

an Faith and Piety, as *Antinomians*, *Quakers*, *Muggletonians*, *Independents*, *Baptists*, &c. These will hinder the Work of Reformation ; and to tolerate them is putting a Sword into Mad Mens hands, and a murdering of Souls ; not a providing for tender Consciences, but a taking away all Conscience ; For if Error be not kept under, 'twill be Superiour ; What says our Friend *Maggot* ?

Mag. I confess, all men wou'd do what's good in their own Eyes ; But I perceive not, that any are willing to let others do so.

Quak. 'Tis apparent, in the late distracted Times, the *Presbyterians* and *Independents* wou'd by no means allow the most *Learned and Pious Churchmen*, the use of *Common Prayers* ; turn'd 'em out of all, and did not permit them so much Liberty as to teach School for meer Bread.

Mouth. That's undeniable ; and perhaps it may be so again : Every man that's serious and conscientious in his way, cannot be indifferent towards those who tread in contrary Paths ; must therefore use all means probable for the reducing of 'em ; For if we unconcernedly suffer them in their wanderings, we declare we can be content with their Ruin.

Knight. Yet I always divulg'd it as my Principle, to let all people please themselves ; and this monstrously took with the unwary Multitude.

Quak. This is *Longitude* and *Latitude* with a witness ; 'Tis strange Charity to give men free leave to be miserable ! It may gain the Voices and Applause of the most Ignorant, but it can never truly promote Religion.

Mouth. Explain thy self a little more in this matter.

Quak. Make this good Gentleman *Burges* of a Corporation, and he cares not what becomes of the People ; if they'r *Jews*, *Turks*, *Infidels* or *Hereticks*, 'tis all one to him.

Mouth. Prithee *Henry* wave that for the present, and tell us thy Opinion about *Liberty*.

Quak.

Qua. I confels to you all, that (tho our Religion, in the common Notion of it, is to follow the guidance of each man's personal Light, yet) where we have Power, and get the Government into our hands, bind and loose, as we think fit; There we give no more Liberty to *Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Seekers*, than they would grant to us, whom they think to be in a *sinful, a Damnable way*. And for the same Reason is the Church of *England* unblamable, for once putting the Laws in Execution against *Dissenters*; Because they seeing us without their Pale, in their Judgment gone astray, and in great danger to be eternally lost, did likewise think it their duty to use that power which the Laws had given them, to bring us back to their *Communion*.

Bro. It seems, if we turn the Tables, the case will be the same with all Parties; and hereafter we'll no more complain of the *Churchmen* for making good use of their Power, but because we want it.

Qua. I thank thee, *John Ponteus*, thee hast taken this matter by the right handle.

Mouth. I have yet a question or two more to propose to you, Brethren, and wou'd fain be satisfied: *Is not the Church of England a Popish Church? And is't not a very good and commendable design to remove Popery out of the Nation?*

Knight. Truly, what Mr. *Mouth* has offer'd, is very considerable: If any man can prove the Church of *England* *Popish*, 'tis not only fit for us to root out *Popery* in general, but as a means thereto, either to purge or remove that Church.

Qua. Mark that! our *Knight* says something to the purpose; 'tis not enough barely to accuse, plain proof should go before Sentence; and if you talk of purging, *Ponteus's Pills* will soon carry off all the Dregs from that Church.

Mouth. For my life, Sir *Anthony*, I am not able to prove it a *Popish Church*; I was carry'd on, as many men are, with the Prejudices of Education; cry'd out as loud as any body,
Po-

Popery, Popery, Popery! But I here profess, I know not why.

Mag. Methinks the Church of *England* should be very pure, being already cleans'd of so many Dregs of *Phanaticism*, and so needs no more purging. I don't believe that old ill-look'd Sorcerer in t'other Parish, who spends half his time at a Meeting, to rail bitterly against the Publick Church, as altogether *Popish, Idolatrous* and *Antichristian*; For after all his blustering and clamour, I cou'd never find that he fairly made out any one, even the least particular of that charge; But he had his Ends, *Profelytes* and *Money*.

Bro. The truth on't is, I *John Ponteus*, have been a very busie inquisitive Fellow; wou'd have been overjoy'd (for my own Credit) to have found one Point of False Doctrine, one Flaw in that Church, any one thing that's sinful in all her *Communion*; This I cannot possibly do, more than in pretence; only Trade and Interest, with some Pride in the bottom, tempted me to rail for company; pray let's hear Friend *Henry's* Opinion in this Point.

Qua. For the *Butcher's* Reason, I and our Friends were taught to give this Church Ill Names, calling it the *Whore of Babylon, The Scarlet Whore*, &c. yet at the same time wou'd have hugg'd the real one; kiss'd her Toe, or any other part: This Engine serv'd to draw off from the Church, and to disguise our selves. Believe me, Friends, you may with truth affirm, there are *Popish-Presbyterians, Popish-Independents, Popish-Seekers, Popish-Quakers*, and some *Church-Papists* too; But the Constitution of this Church of *England* (if I speak my Conscience) deserves no such black and reproachful Character: And I dare be bold to say this, He that makes any Faction or Division in this Church, is plainly a Factor for the Church of *Rome*.

Bro. Make it out, and we'll be of thy mind.

Knight. Take heed *Henry*, thou giv'st thy self a box o'th' ear.

Qua. Look to your selves, the Frolick goes round.

Mouth.

Mouth. This matter's too serious to be made a Jest of; be plain, speak all out; I shou'd be willing to know the truth; yet peradventure I may be asham'd to own it.

Mag. Spare no body, no not Sir *Anthony*; I hate Shams.

Qua. Then take my word, we have been all a deceived and deceiving People: This decry'd, this too much forsaken, this injur'd Church, is the only defence under God to keep out Popery: The Church of *England* is justly call'd, *The Eye of all the Reformed Churches*, and the *Protestant Bulwark against Popery*. Under these Names or Titles (without flattery) this Church is commonly spoken of by other Protestant Churches beyond the Seas. Her Constitution is truly Christian, her Ministers Learned, not Noisie, able to detect and baffle the Fallities of *Rome*, and have successively done so ever since the Reformation to this day. If then the *Dissenters* shall endeavour to put out the Eye of the Protestant Churches, the dark Doctrines and Traditions of *Rome* will the sooner spread over Christendom. To pull down the Fence, is a preposterous way of securing the Vineyard; And you may as well keep off an Enemy, by removal of the Bulwark; as to keep out Popery, by disabling the *Ch. of England*. If the *Romanists* themselves did not think so, why have they all along levell'd their utmost force, and employ'd their greatest Policy to beat down, or undermine that Church? If it were inclin'd to Popery, why wou'd the *Papists* be such Fools to burn the Common-Prayer Book, and Martyr those excellent Men, who compil'd the very Prayers that are now read in this Church? If it were Popish, why did so many Priests and Jesuits, with others of the same Faction, in vast Numbers assist the *Dissenters* in the late Wars; many Hundreds of *Romanists* being found dead among those that fell on the Parliament side? Why did King *James* (when he had a mind to favour Popery) discountenance the Church of *England*, and all her Friends? Why did a declar'd Popish King, imprison Seven *English Bishops* at one time?

time? Prosecute and suspend others, and terrify all but *Dissenters*? These he daily caress'd, as the fittest Instrument to let in Popery, by the Back-Door of Separation. If the Church of *England* were Popish, why should the Priests, *Emissaries*, and Agents of *Rome*, so strenuously endeavour to divide this Church; forcing the well-meaning Dissenters to drudge for the Pope, while they, poor Souls, think they'r doing their own work, or the work of the Lord? The *Romans* know right well, that if the Church of *England* cou'd remain undivided, they must utterly despair of introducing their Religion. The Division of Enemies (say they) is as useful as the Agreement of Friends: They have hopes so long as we divide; while they see the Humours in conflict, they believe *the Body at last will be dissolv'd*. If the Clergy of *England* were Friends to *Rome*, why so many elaborate Books and Sermons (without number), set out by them, on purpose to preserve this Nation from Popery? Look into their Liturgies, Homilies, Services, Canons; Read the *Book of Martyrs*, *Jewel*, *Laud*, *Hooker*, *Chillingworth*, *Bramhall*, *Cozens*, *Hammond*, &c. and the Famous Writings of the Present Bishops, and other Friends of this Church; and you'll soon be convinc'd they are none of those Ill Men as Popular Abuse and Clamour have represented 'em.

Mag. Thou hast said enough, *Henry*.

Qua. I'm desir'd to speak all out; why dost interrupt me *Jonathan*? I wou'd tell ye, Friends, That this censur'd, this condemn'd Church is truly reform'd from all *Romish* Superstitions; She retains nothing of the *Romish Church*, but what's agreeable to the Gospel, and is derived from the Primitive Apostolical Church. Here's no half-Communion, no more Sacraments thrust upon the people than our Lord instituted; no Prayers in an unknown Tongue, no praying to Saints and Angels, no adoring of Images, Pictures and Relicks; no Doctrine obtruded upon our Faith, contrary to Sense and Reason;

son; no Practices allowed that are forbidden of God; no expunging one Commandment out of the *Decalogue*, or contriving Arts and Devices to make void the rest. But her Devotions are pure and spiritual, having God, and him only for their Object; Her Doctrine is sound and Orthodox, having Christ for its Corner-Stone, the Prophets and Apostles for its Foundation. Whose *Ceremonies* are few and decent, countenanc'd by *Primitive Antiquity*, and much becoming the Gravity and Sobriety of Religion: In short, a *Church* that dares to be understood; and is sure, the more she's look'd into, the more to be admir'd and embrac'd. I conclude from the Premises, That our Opposition of this *Church*, was not for want of Ignorance; that our hideous Out-cries were altogether unjust. We may as well say, That the Scriptures, and Form of Sound Words, the Creed, are Popish. That he who believes, lives and prays according to Christ's Rules, is Popishly inclin'd, and no good Christian; as to tell the people that the Religion of this Church is Popish. And now answer what you will.

Knight. Thanks for thy good Sermon, *Henry*.

Qua. I desire it may be so to thee, and all the rest.

Mag. I say, we have been finely fool'd, and trick'd out of our Reason by sham-pretences. I did not imagine our Friend *Henry* had been Master of so great Sense.

Qua. When I spake like a *Church-man*, you might well expect Sense, Truth and Reason from me.

Bro. What he has said, carries such Authority as to deserve consideration, serious consideration.

Mouth. I feel some strange workings upon my Spirits by this discourse; he has almost stopt my mouth: I desire to be of a more Evangelical Temper for the time to come.

[Looks pale like Death.

Knight. He declares for the Church; and if the rest are of the same Mind and Judgment, I must stand no more for this

this Burrough : All considering Men will be sure to joyn against me, if they knew so much as he does.

Qua. Yea, verily, I am for Monarchy in the State, and Episcopacy in the Church.

Bro. This Nation has fought against their Lawful King, we have beheaded and banish'd for Conscience-sake, and shall we grow fond of a King now ?

Qua. We have seen our Folly, and smarted for't; are now sensible of the Excellency and Necessity of *Kingly Government*, with all its faults.

Mag. Is not another as good ?

Qua. That's impossible: for a Rightful Monarchy is the most Divine, the most Ancient, and the most excellent Government in the World: 'Tis the Imitation of that in Heaven, which is by *One God*; the Restitution of the Primitive Government of Mankind, which was by *One King*; and the reflection of that admirable Government in Nature, which rules the many Members of the Body by *One Soul*. Experience proves, that Ship is best guided which is steer'd by *One Pilot*; That Army best order'd, when commanded by *One General*, and that Nation best govern'd that's rul'd by *One King*. The contrary wou'd make a Kingdom like the Serpent *Amphisbæna*, who having two Heads, drawing two several ways, does miserably writhe and turn the body; so that after many painful Convulsions, 'tis torn into loathsome peices.

Mouth. I have a little recovered my breath and speech; but there's no coping with him in these Arguments: He has said a great deal for *Kingly Government*. Now give me leave to ask thee, *May we not be well without Lords Bishops, their Lawn-Sleeves, and Formalities.*

Qua. An envious, ill-natur'd Age we live in; Sundry wise men are as angry at thy holding forth without *Episcopal Orders*: Thy teaching is a grand Usurpation; thou hast neither
Missi-

Mission nor Learning to recommend thee to the People: I'm sure, when the great and just Judge shall ask, who requir'd these things at thy hands? Thou'lt then be speechless in good earnest, Neighbour Jos.

Mouth. I hope, I may live to repent; (yet 'tis thought as difficult for an Old *Oliverian*, as an Atheist so to do;) well, leave that to time and me; and proceed.

Quak. — He was a wise Man, acquainted with the Laws and Constitutions of this Kingdom, who said, *No Bishop, no King*; and we find it true, they live or dye together. The most Learned do acknowledge, that Episcopacy was the only Government of the Church, in the best and purest Ages of Christianity; All along in and from the Apostles, to *Calvins* time, it was as hard to find any part of the *Christian World* without a Church, as to find a Church without a Bishop; And, that nothing less than Pride, Envy, Covetousness, and Ambition tempted Men to seek the laying aside, or disturbance of that sacred Order.

Mouth. I never troubled my Head with Antiquity, or the practice of former Ages: But what think ye of the *Dutch*, That happy People? They're govern'd without King, or Bishop, and we wou'd be Proud to imitate them in all things.

Quak. Drown 'em, they may thank us for their happiness; if not, Are they to be followed more then God? Must we neglect the Patterns of the best Governments in the Universe, to Ape the *Flemish* Fashions? If they have any thing that may be call'd Government; On second thoughts, you'll hardly fall in Love with it: *A Many Headed Monster*; whose worldly gain and traffick is their main Religion: And if they do at all live peaceably with their Brethren, 'tis not the Government that does it; but they're rather like an *Heterogeneous Body*, frozen and congeal'd together by a Cold indifference; than like Men, united by Reason and Society?

The Best Choice

Knight. Dear *Henry* ! Forbear, talk not too long and loud, lest our Adversaries over hear us; we have yet some Friends in this Town we must keep in the dark, else we're undone for ever.

Quak. If thou fearest the Light, *Anthony* ; I doubt thy deeds are Evil.

Knight. Speak for me, Mr. *Mouth* !

Mouth. 'Tis not proper to tell every body what we say, or do ; in all Consultations, there shou'd be secrecy ; And, truly, the World is of late grown so quick sighted ; especially as to Immoralities and Backslidings of their Superiors ; that whoever wou'd keep People in the Dark, must take away all their Senses.

Maggot. Oh the Squibs ! The Jeers ! The ugly Reflections ! It grieved me, to see and hear how things went at the Assizes ; some smiling, laughing, whispering ; others with lift up hands and eyes, stood amaz'd at the Country-talk ; and a very few seem'd sorrowful, for their Neighbours misfortune.

Brok. I did but shew the Pictures of a Woman and Child (which I had in my Shop, among other Goods ;) And I had the Town and Countrey about my Ears ; I was soon forc'd to take down my Pieces, and almost lost my Fair ; vext at Heart to hear our best Member, our wondrous Counsellor so derided ; Pray Sir *Anthony* ! Is there any thing in't ?

Knight. Yes, yes, there was too much in't. [Scratches.

Qua. Why was not that deed of darkness kept secret ?

Mag. Nature, thou know'st *Henry*, shuns confinement, is covetous of Liberty.

Mouth. And Women, like Hens, cackle when a Child's born.

Bro. But how came they to discover the Young Counsellor's Finger i'th Pye ?

Knight. His Visits were long and frequent, he was extravagantly bountiful to the diligent Midwife ; and she (in meer Gratitude) boasted of his Generosity.

Qua.

Qua. How cou'd she know his Name? sure he was not so infatuated to tell that!

Knight. Treason will out; in time of Extremity the poor unexperienc'd Lady, unwarily said, *O my Dear, my Dear! Unfortunate! my most Unfortunate!* and so nam'd him; The Plot was discover'd, and a Long Cloak cou'd not hide, nor a huge Periwig disguise the man that wears his own hair.

Bro. I was amaz'd, my Brethren, to see our Champion of *th' Inchaned Castle*, look so sheepishly as he did; avoid his Friends and Business, as burdens to him.

Mag. He that has skill to make the best of a bad cause, I'd have him do so now; stoutly deny, and if occasion require, forswear the Fact.

Qua. He that's guilty of a premeditated Evil, (as this was) will ne'r scruple the telling, or swearing a thousand Lies to conceal or excuse it. Vice has commonly Impudence for its companion.

Knight. Had not I been a little Tatling Fool, his denying might have done him service. But alas! I cou'd not keep what was told me as a Secret; I gloried in *th' Adventure*, talk'd openly in *Coffee-houses*, laugh'd at it in *Lobby*, own'd it for a peice of my Son's Gallantry; never, never considering the Sin and Scandal; the utter Ruin of a Young Lady, and the Just Reflection and Mischief on my own Family.

[Seems to weep.

Mouth. Come, come, chear up, Man! It must be a special Family that has none of that sort of Good Natur'd Creatures in it: Here, Sir *Anthony*, take a Spoonful of this *Cordial*; Sorrows are dry----

[Drinks.

Knight. Well, good Gentlemen, now I'm soft, and my Heart open, ask what you will, I'll tell you all I know or hear; I cannot help it.

Mag. Is the Child in the Land of the Living?

Knight. Yes, 'tis alive.

Mouth.

Mouth. A Son?

Knight. 'Tis so.

Bro. Is't a *Christian*?

Knight. Yes, by the Mother's-side.

Month. Tell's the *Child's* Name, if you can.

Knight. ---*W. A. C.* you'll have it at full length next Election.

Mag. Is he any thing like the Father?

Knight. As ever he can stare; very forward; intends to stand for a Burgeſs next Year, if he lives.

Bro. By all means perſuade him againſt that; his Father, poor child! begun too ſoon, and loſt himſelf.

Knight. 'Tis a forward Age we live in; ſome write Men before their time; but ſeldom acquit themſelves of great miſtakes.

Qua. What ſays my Lady *Caſtle* to this? The 'Squire, I think, was her particular Favourite.

Knight. He was ſo; but the Scene's chang'd; ſhe cannot endure him: All his Rhetorick is in vain: In revenge, and (to ſhew her Abhorrence of this *Crime*) ſhe brings all my old ſins to Remembrance, and when her Tongue's weary, ſhe fall's a grieving, ready to break her very Heart.

Mouth. If ſhe dies, Sir *Anthony*, you may marry the Young Injur'd Lady: I know no Law againſt that.

Knight. I once knew a Son that married the Father's: and there's as much Reason for the Father to get the Son's Miſtreſs, if he can.

Mag. I'm of the ſame Opinion.

Qua. Does the 'Squires Wife take it with any patience?

Knight. Oh! no: She frets, ſtorms, teares off her hair; is in that Rage and Fury, as if newly put into *Bedlam*: This Violence holds many hours together, and when this Fit goes off, with a trembling Voice ſhe ſays,---*Ah wretched Woman!* that I ſhould live to this unhappy Day! I did not think my Dear
had

had been False, of all men; or so very effeminate to love Sugar more than Tobacco. I brought a large Portion: He told me I was Handsome; That he admir'd me beyond the common rate: But 'Sdeath, He's a Perfidious Man. Now I perceive why One Night, One Sorry Night in Seven was allotted to the poor Wife. His absenting my Bed was not, as he pretended, to study Law, or Gospel, but to Violate both: And by Heavens! I had rather die, than continue above ground, to be thus miserably tormented as I am.

Mouth. A sad story! And it seems too true to make a Jest on't: The Lord comfort the poor Wife, I say.

Mag. Ay, and the Young Ladies Relations; for I hear they sadly resent this grand Injury.

Knight. They take it so heinously there's no pacifying of 'em.

Bro. I heard that a Gentleman (within a mile of an Oak;) had sent the Squire a Challenge. And that he pleaded Privilege, for his Defence.

Knight. There was a talk about it; but all conclude him unworthy of such Fair Play; no Gentleman being bound, upon equal Terms, to venture his Life with a Villain.

Mouth. What other method or way can they take to chastize him?

Knight. If they permit him to live (which argues Mercy) they intend an Impeachment in Parliament; and if that fails, to hamper him in *Doctors-Commons*, or prosecute the Spark at *Common Law*.

Mag. I'm told you have a Copy of the Charge drawn up against him.

Knight. Very true, I have the heads of it in this Paper.

Qua. Keep it to thy self Sir *Anthony*! It may be improper, (on some Accounts) for us to hear it.

Knight.

Knight. I nothing distrust you my Friends ; And so I take all Men to be ; for I shew the Paper to every body I converse with.

Quak. If it be so with thee, let's hear it.

The Charge, &c.

Knight. That the Eldest Son of a *Baronet*, a Man in the sacred Bonds of *Wedlock*, a Learned Counsellor, a grave Senator, a Sworn Friend, a pretender to all Virtue ; suspected of no ill, or base design, &c. But being a true Chip o'th' old Block, a Lewd Young Fellow, of Spruce, Natural Parts, innocent as a Serpent ; Forgetting all Friendship, Fidelity, and Religion ; Not having the Fear of God before his Eyes ; instigated by his own *Carnal Inclination*, did either in *Hertfordshire*, *Yorkshire*, or at *London*, Insinuate, Court, Delude, Intice, Steal, Carry away, and Dishonour a Young, Fair, Beautiful, Lovely Creature, the Top and Glory of her Family, a fit Wife for a Prince, Losing her one of the best Matches in the whole Countrey, with a Settlement of a great Estate, and destroying her Vertue, Good Name and Fortune--Which (if true) not all his Wit, Wealth, Honour, Life nor Death can repair. *This is the Summ.*

Mouth. A most severe *Charge* ! O fearful ! worse and worse ! what shall we do ?

Mag. Be hiss'd and pointed at, as we walk the Streets.

Qua. And if we wou'd seem honest, we must alter our choice, meerly to save our own Reputation : Plainly, if such Venial Sins, Sins of the Flesh, do unqualify for Burgesses, we ought to *Samson* and circuncise our Worthy *Members* at both ends.

Knight. Thou'rt a Wag, a Wag ; Neighbour *Henry* has a *Colt's Tooth*, as well as I : ha, ha, he.

Bro. I mortally dread the Event : can ye contrive no way to help us ?

Mag. Suppose we shou'd damn this Report, as a Mistake, grounded

grounded on an uncertain Story in one of the *Lying Posts*?

Mouth. Let's hear it.

Mag. A fine, delicate, new, well-proportion'd *English*-built Vessel, carrying lovely *Lemon Colours* in the Top-Mast, and sailing a little from the Coast of *Virginia*, (without a Convoy) was treacherously boarded by an *Eastern Pirate*, who first flatter'd, and then treated her as an Enemy, robb'd her of her choicest Treasure, and so left her to fluctuate upon the wide Sea- - The Owners of the rifled Ship (in their Description of the *Pirate*) gave indeed a shrewd suspicion of our brisk Squire; but don't clearly prove him the Man; And why may not this (like other things) pass more for Romance than Truth?

Qua. This is Maggot all over.

Bro. It may pass for a merry, fanciful Whimsey; but we must Romance curfiedly, if we excuse these foul Facts?

Mouth. Say, She's unfortunately married, and for that Reason cares not to see her Friends.

Qua. Then we're Lyars, and the Truth is not in us.

Mouth. An officious Lie in this case, is practicable among the Saints: If this will not take, I advise that we all get Hearts of Stone, and Faces of Brass; never mind what the World says, let 'em talk till they'r weary.

Kt. Gent. Mr. *Mouth* has hit the Nail at last, and I do humbly petition and implore, that you resolve to take this method.

Qua. If so, we may audaciously vote for 3 or 4 of a Family.

Knight. Two are thought to many by wiser men; pray Vote but for two at once.

Mag. The other two may be a reserve against a scarcity of good men in the Countrey where we live.

Qua. Before I grant what our Knight asks, I wou'd interrogate and search a little farther, that we may rightly understand what we do.

Knt. Be free; for I wou'd content you in every particular.

Mag. Speak truth then, and shame the Devil, the Devil!

Sir *Anthony.*

Knt.

Knt. Upon my Honour I will.

Qua. Can you fairly assign any real advantage or benefit gain'd to this Town, by our out-voting the Church-Party?

Knt. ---Mum for that.

Mag. Have you sav'd this Corporation from Quartering of Soldiers? or did you get poor House-keepers their money, when due for Quarters?

Knt. I did but tell you so, to engage Voices.

Mag. What good have you or the 'Squire done us hitherto?

Knt. None to boast of.

Qua. Have you defended the Burrough (you'r chosen for) from any Evils or Inconveniencies?

Knt. They're unknown if I did.

Mag. Did you ever in all your Membership, get one small addition to our ancient Charter?

Knt. 'Twas quite out of my thoughts.

Mouth. What service will you be sure to do us for the future?

Knt. I perform the least of any man, and will promise no more.

Qua. Dost think we had not been as safe in other hands?

Knt. The Devil's in ye for being so inquisitive: I fear a Snake in the Grass; am at a great loss what to say, was never so hard put to't in my life: I'll leave you to your own thoughts.

Exit Sir Anthony.

Mag. He's gone: --- We've school'd, catechiz'd, interrogated, rap't, pump'd, and squeez'd him; let him go as he is.

Bro. Is he a fit Senator who tells his mind at this easy rate? Regards nothing the Welfare, the true Interest of the People? who confesses he never did, nor can do us good?

Mouth. If we dare speak truth, we were mistaken in our Choice; --- What shall we resolve on? Our Reputation's at stake, and 'tis next an Impossibility to retrieve it.

Mag. Every man give his Opinion, and so part.

Mouth. Begin Mr. Maggot.

Mag.

Mag. Shall we hire the mad brutish Bellman to swear at random? To make Proclamation thro' the whole Town, That our Members have been abus'd: --- *Et Aquam caput dicti Leon. fudit.* That he wept for 'em; or that his Head was Dropsical, & *imposuit*: That he cunningly put upon the Doctor, instead of paying for the Cure.

Qua. None shou'd speak or write *Latin*, unless they understand it. Pray let Mr. *Mouth* write good *English*, and give it under his Hand, *That a Community of Women is no sin*, and by his convincing Arguments our Members may be right still.

Mouth. I may study the Point; but I distrust my Abilities: If the Bellman's Noise is not sufficient, let some busy, cringing popular Tool or Agent, be employ'd to justify their Actions; without blushing, attempt to blanch an *Æthiopian's* Face, and threaten with the Lash of the Law, all that have boldness enough to accuse our innocent *Members*.

Qua. A pretty Speech! prithee don't put men upon such Absurdities, nor believe the Counsellor so unadvis'd to bring himself on the Stage. That's not the way to quash, but spread and confirm the Report.

Bro. I wish (as innocent as they are) they wou'd silently leave the Town, live in some place of Obscurity, till this talk is quite ovet, and forgotten.

Maggot. Then, Bless my Eye-sight, I shall see 'em no more, Well; what say ye? Shall we Vote with the Church; and demonstrate that we abhor all Vice, even in our own Members?

Mouth. Against this I 'ave nothing to Object, but the unavoidable loss of our Honours, and Offices; and to be set in *Stattu Co.*

Quak. No more Language of the Beast; I guess at thy meaning, thou dread'st to be in the same despicable Circumstances, as your Commission found ye.

Maggot. I take our Advancement to be a Jacobite device; no favour, unless the disquiet, hatred, and curses of the People are so.

Mouth.

Mouth. What if we set up some other Gentleman of our side; who have a small degree of Goodness, Wisdom, and Moderation in what they do?

Qua. Then choose none of the *Holy-Kirk*, with their Spiritual Gun-Powder, Fire-Works, and Crackers. If you do, you may as prudently Vote for *Your Old Forringer Publican*; he only felt, but did not defile the Maid.

Maggot. — That's more than you, or I know: I confess, I never lik'd him since, and am afraid I don't much mend the matter at *Ware*, so that I shall either turn Atheist, or go to Church at last; there, with good Sir *Anthony*, I may religiously read a *Gazette*, If I dislike the Prayers.

The Conclusion

Qua. He that duely reflects on all we have said, cannot but conclude us a mere *Rabel*; a rude heap of rubbish and confusion; And now, if out of pure spite, and a Spirit of Contradiction, we boggle at the establish'd Church; and will not from thence elect Gentlemen of Substance, Honour, and Integrity to Act for you; My final advice is: Chuse some honest Tradesmen (of the same Church) dealers in Malt, Leather, and such necessary and innocent Commodities; some considering Men, who know and regard the Interest, the Wellfare of their Town and Countrey; and are bound for their own sakes, to improve, not impoverish them; By these means we may promote and secure a free Trade (without exception) keep up the credit of our Charter; and be sooner eas'd of the *Wars* and *Taxes*, jarrings and discontents, we now miserably groan under.

Chorus. Thou hast said exceeding well, *Henry*, we'll go and Communicate this Conference to the Rest of our Brethren.

Farewell! Farewell!

Exeunt Omnes.

Eccles. 12, 12, 13. Of making Books, there's no End — Hear the conclusion of the whole matter, *Fear God and keep his Commandments*; For this is the whole Duty of *Man*.

E I N I S.

